

TRANSCRIPT: MARIA DE LOURDE'S VIDEO TAPE

Taped November, 1984 for

Compelling Works Consultations

Introduction

I have been now three days in New York and as usual when I come to the United States, I think that these three days have been three weeks or three months -- because the impressions are so varied, so intense, and so very directed to what I am thinking and what I am feeling that I wish I could stretch out to many people and also to many other events so as to prolong what I am experiencing (living) here now. And one of the things I came here for was the presentation of the new book edited by Robin Morgan, "Sisterhood is Global," and to which I contributed a very small and irrelevant article about women in Portugal as seen through my lens, the way I understand and can see and foresee what the situation of women is and will be.

What is of Value, Human Effort or Technology?

But one of the things that in the meetings we had with women from 25 countries, who met with some of the foundations who had been behind this research work, has been something that has struck me very strongly. Somebody was saying, "How come that in this world of ours if you need water and put a pump in to get it from a well, this is represented not only in your industrial capacity in the country but also in your GNP and in all the figures the country can have. But if a woman walks fifteen miles a day to get water this is totally invisible." How come that if you have central heating, this is apparent in your national budgets as a normal expenditure.

And yet if women and children and men are walking miles and miles at a time to get wood and in that way proceeding through a process that causes the "desertification" of many areas in the world, this again is damaging to nature but is totally irrelevant as if it didn't exist.

Which brings me to a fundamental question that was raised with great strength. What has finally value our society? Have we become so manipulated by the technologies, whether the technology be in industry or be economic technology, that we have totally forgotten all the ways, all the processes, by which human beings live and relate to each other?



So this may be shocking for some people...my first metaphysical question here in the United States is what is valuable and which are the things to which we attach value, and why? If I dig deeply into this question, I can't help but think in terms of tomorrow and in terms of the things I see in the world I see today. And to what do we attach value? I think we attach values to a certain lifestyle. And the lifestyle has something to do with the capacity to work freely -- to have a certain leisure, not to be pressured, and to be able to relate with those whom we love and with whom we have some connections. Well, can it be this way for most of mankind?

The Shift in Urbanization from North To South

And I would like to say something that I read about during this year and which has since then been very much in my mind as one of the key questions for the future. And it is the comparison between urbanization at the scale of the planet between the beginning of the 20th century and what will be the beginning of the 21st century.

At the beginning of the 20th century, among the 20 highly populated cities in the world, only three were in the Southern Hemisphere. All the others were cities in the north -- of course, New York, Paris, London, Hamburg, Milano, and so on. But if you look towards the year 2000, among the 20 most highly populated cities in the world only three will be from the Northern Hemisphere. And these will be New York, Los Angeles, and Tokyo -- and Paris and London and Milano somehow have disappeared from the map.

And then we will have Mexico City, Sap Paulo, Manila, and New Deli and all those cities coming up as huge "Megapolis," in fact, as we used to say in the sixties. And what is so special about this phenomenon is that while the big cities in the Northern Hemisphere have taken many decades, centuries in fact, to become what they are now, these big cities from the Southern Hemisphere have become, or are becoming what they are, in much less than fifty years. So the amount of problems in terms of health, infra structures, sanitary equipment, transportation, lodging, education, communication of people between each other - all that is something that is going to be concentrated in a very small space but with numbers which now rank among the numbers of the average size of a single country.

So there is here a problem of scale which is tremendously important and about which we are doing still very little and about which we have to think in order to understand what will be the future and what are the challenges for us today.



Technology Spreads The Generation Gap and Challenges Human Values

Another point I would like to stress is in the technological field which is connected with this. The two sides, the traditional technology, how it has shifted so much to informatics (Information) and how through informatics the generation gap is going to be as it never was.

There is coming up a huge part of the human population which thinks in digital terms. And this is a complete shift in the mentality. Our minds, even when they work too much in a Cartesian way, they are not digital. They are able to go around issues and to relate them with each other without bypassing some stages of the process. Well, the new generation will be in a totally different way, and don't ask me how it will be, I don't know. I only know it is different. There comes to my mind the image of a friend of mine who has been a very young minister of finances and the economy in my country. I consider him a very brilliant young fellow who is now in his early forties. And the other day I came to his house and there he was with a friend of his children. A boy of 16 was teaching him how to operate the new computers. And this is already an episode, and anecdote, of what will be the shift in mentality. I do think that maybe the challenge put before us -- it is not only to say that it will be different, but it is to say what is important to nourish and to deepen so as to be able to translate that into the new language and into the new way of thinking.

Another problem with dealing with the technological field is the whole question of biogenetics. And, of course, all of us are somehow even afraid of what can happen in terms of total genetic alteration of the human species. But I see clearly that there are things happening (that we take as facts) like something that is printed in the newspapers. There are things which are extremely upsetting for our very concept of the human person and the kind of milieu and fundamental or primordial relationships the human person needs. I am particularly addressing the question of some women having children for somebody else and I think that the women's movement is missing the boat by not tackling exactly the philosophical questions present in that. By pretending to be so modern and so up to date in the sexual revolution, it has completely forgotten one of the most fundamental acquisitions of our century, mainly Freud's ideas and all the developments that his ideas have had through his disciples and all those who have worked in that field.



I think that this is a gain, something that you cannot overlook and which is already having an impact on the way in which we look at the human person.

The Shift From Atlantic To Pacific

I think on a totally other level, the question of where are the events of the world decided upon (is important). What is really somehow the cradle of events? In the United States and also in my country, we are part of an alliance, of a treaty involving the North Atlantic because we have considered that the North Atlantic was a very important part of the world. And somehow there was the assumption, the geographical assumption, that this part of the world was key to the rest of the world.

Now in the International General Assembly -- while I mentioned that I had some interesting reactions, - I say later, what do we see? We see the countries who are demographically more important, who have the greatest weight in the world, will be around the Pacific, are already around the Pacific. And these countries are the United States, Japan, China and the Soviet Union. The countries which have the greatest concentration of technological development are around the Pacific; the United States and Japan particularly, and to some extent the Soviet Union. And the countries which have the greatest concentration of military weapons have those weapons in the Pacific and not in the Atlantic. These countries are the United States and the Soviet Union. So the real confrontation and real development of things will be happening, in the next 100 years probably, around the Pacific and not around the Atlantic. This does not mean that no one is crossing the Atlantic (River). And I hope you do cross as often as possible -- at least in my case, to have this tremendous impact of the American life. But I think we have to look also at the other side of the world where things are beginning to happen.

This change is as important as the change that took place from the Mediterranean to Flanders and the North Sea in an earlier period of history.

I know it seems like I am doing a patchwork of just throwing out events that we are all acquainted with. I think this, as we approach our own situation now, what has it to do with our lives now? I think it has a lot to do with them; because our lives have also very specific questions, and very specific problems and challenges. Yesterday (another reason why I came at this time to the United States) I was in the meeting of the board of directors of the World Policy Institute -- which is, as you know, an American institution -- which has a



little bit of "green pepper," with myself and a few other outsiders. And there again I had an extremely stimulating meeting. I heard those people, very committed people, all of them are scholars in fact, talking about the life in the United States now. (I am addressing you with a time lag, as this tape was made a few months before you listen to me.)

We Seek Superficial Answers instead of Real Basic Alternatives

We are just at the moment of the ppst (presidential) election in the States and certainly this raises some basic questions. The questions are not, as some have said, in some kind of distorted, almost perverted way, asking "why are the results different from the polls?" As if the polls were really commanding the results and not the real votes. The questions are not there, but the questions are elsewhere than this. Why the whole debate and what has been going on, also from the foreign correspondents here and all those who are knowledgeable about the United States but are so devoid of content. Why? And the point is, as these American friends were saying yesterday, in fact we don't find alternatives. We don't find them in one camp and we don't find them in another camp, in countries which have polarization in two sides. But we don't find them either in countries with a wider variety in spectrum of political positions.

The fact is that we all seem to atake refuge somewhere else and not in the real issues before us. So in a way when we think about peace, about disarmament, about all these fundamental questions, about nuclear freezing and so on we are thinking about something fundamental for human survival. But we cannot forget that those questions which are intimately connected with our capacity to bring about concrete alternatives to the problems we face everywhere in the world. And this I think is extremely important.

I was very, very struck during these three days by the amazing similarity of problems, between the United States and my own country. That may sound ridiculous to some of you, but it is not. It is not.

Because in fact what are we really looking for? We are looking for another type of power. A power that is not selling its product to the people. But on the contrary, it should be asking from the people what they really want, what they can do.



This is a drama of my country -- to be able to face basic human needs. But I dare say it is also the drama really of the whole world. We seem to be unable to come up with viable alternatives for different problems. And these viable alternatives - what are they? It is a whole process of inventing.

But even the day before yesterday, I was interviewed here on a radio program, which is a morning show, a one-hour interview and cut by commercial ads. And I was struck by the fact that the woman who was interviewing me and two other women were extremely perceptive of the in-depth questions and really challenging us to answer and at the same time she would every five minutes break the discussion just to read a few absolutely incredible sheets of paper where she would say, if you want cosmetics you should look for this trademark or if you are trying to buy something for Thanksgiving please be attentive and "shop well" and again and again and again it was quantity money, prices, and finally this slogan all the time -- "shop well." So at the end I had to say indeed there is no difference between the situation of people in my country and the situation of people in the United States. We are all intoxicated by "shop well" and I come back to the first question; by quantity, by all that, by this "shop well" -- which is somehow the indication to what do we give value -- to what are we attributing some value.

Fundação Cuidar o Futuro

New Life Will Come From Spiritual Networking

If I compare while I am stressing that our problems are basically the same, it is because more and more that is certainly one of the greatest threads that goes through linguistics, philosophy, physics, biology and so on. We have to live in a time where the science of systems helps us to connect all the events and all that is going on in different societies.

And this brings me very clearly to all our networking and what we have to do -- from the big challenges of the next 100 years, the next century, which are already emerging in our society, from the difficulties and problems which we have to face today, and which are very clear. What can we do? And I think the first thing is to be able to name what we are involved with and then from that establish gradually the connections so that we will be autonomous, independent parts, but solidary parts of the whole, of the system -- working really as a network -- as a web, if you want. And I don't think you can escape nowadays



I don't think this is yet another fashion. No. This is a the only way now, the only way possible to relate and to come up with those alternatives I was mentioning before: alternatives which have to do with our lifestyle, with the way we see our work, the way we see people relating to each other, even with the way we see the depth dimension, the religious dimension, on the religious weight of our lives coming into being, somehow relating to each other. Then this pervasive spirit of God can come to life, can show how things are moving and what is or can be our response to the things around us, and, in ourselves. For me, therefore, it all comes into a nutshell of what is the spirit now and what do we expect and do we hope for the work of the spirit within ourselves and in this continuous networking. I feel that we are, so to speak, always in a period of the creation, the spirit is hovering over the waters, and that is what we are living now; and when the spirit is hovering that is because new life is going to come in an organized way, with new forms, with new possibilities out of what is there as a fluid formless reality.

Sometimes when one speaks as I just did, there remains an impression of, well, it is too vague -- as someone said to me the other day, there are not enough specifics. And on purpose, I have left it at the level of vision. I think what we miss mostly -- and I have been hearing that in many different platforms -- is a really clear vision of what is the situation in which we live, and what are the perspectives we have. And this I have heard not only in the small groups like the one I mentioned I was in yesterday, but for instance, in a council in which I participated, the Interaction Council of Former Heads of Government, where some 27 people from all geographic regions are present and where our discussions are very intimate and very down to earth. With the problems everyone carries, because most of these men have been for years in power. There is the acknowledgement that the day to day management, even of political questions, has nothing of a vision -- doesn't carry with itself a vision. And what I have heard many of them saying is if only when I was in power I had the capacity and the time to have a vision, to be guided by the vision. So this for me is a very important element which is needed as much at the top level of governments of the countries as it is needed in any kind of enterprise that we initiate, in any kind of work that we do together.



But by saying vision I don't mean at all visionary. I don't mean a kind of dreamy and vague concern about the world, about the future without trying to translate it into the hic et nunc (there and now) of our reality. I think it's very important and in our times we may be able to recognize and to contribute to the formation of the vision and yet to refrain from being visionary. Where is the borderline between the two? I think you are visionary when you look into a crystal ball, isn't it? It is as if you dreamt when you were a teenager a story that will never happen and things that are really absolutely out of this world. And I've known that for a long time, you will use the word "dreams" because you thought that the word dream would convey with it, the same content as vision. But I think that dream is the result indeed of the visionary, but the result of the one who carries with him or her a vision is not dream. It's another thing, and that other thing has to do with the life of the spirit. That other thing is wisdom. Paradoxically, vision is not linked with something that is euphoric, with something absolutely out of this world, but is linked with reality as it is and with the capacity to see that reality in another light and to put our bodies on the line for the change that is needed, even if we can only venture and risk a small approach to it. I think that wisdom is today our in-depth answer to the needs to the spiritual needs of the world. Wisdom to see the questions that we individually (but mainly together) can cope with and can empower each other with, and then the wisdom to wrestle through the process of creating these alternatives I was speaking about earlier.

I don't think we can just with dreams build anything. As we cannot with just dry facts which don't amount to any positive outlook nor move toward the future. It is the vision that gives the possibility to move beyond the present reality and yet it is the vision also that brings with it the capacity to embrace the reality as reality with its depth, its contents. The French have a very good word. It is "epecer," something which is there, which is hard, which is difficult, sometimes it is even a bit suspect.

Personal Choice Gives Life.

I would like to speak now from my experience in terms of politics. I am now in the process of making a decision of which I don't know the outcome. And I feel very much as if I would be, again for me, seeing the division of waters. There are those who say, "be aware, be careful. Be careful." And those who say "be careful" are those who will remain forever spectators.



And others who say, "Heavens, it is extremely difficult what you are attempting now, what you are trying to respond to now. But maybe your only chance to be alive is to try to respond to that." That is not just an isolated feeling. It's something that can be done again and again with new people. This networking I was talking about earlier is not just a theory put into practice but it asks from us the tremendous capacity of "de-possession" - to be able not possess things and even not possess relationships but letting the relationships form and then un-form and form again. To let them coalesce around things and around projects which are meaningful and can embody those alternatives. This is a very painful decision for many of us to make at given times but the only way to remain an alive element of that network. And I ask myself, isn't the whole of mankind a network of hope and of aspiration for a greater quality of being? And it is into that being, Jesus Christ, that I think we can put all our capacity of vision and hope for a new wisdom to help us in this Compelling Work that we want all to do.

Fundação Cuidar o Futuro

